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SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: THAILAND POLITICAL UPDATE: ANTI-THAKSIN FORCES TO MOUNT FURTHER PRESSURE TO OUST THAKSIN

REF: BANGKOK 1376 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: POLITICAL COUNSELOR SUSAN M. SUTTON. REASON: 1.4 (D)

1. (C) Summary: At a March 6 rally at Sanam Luang Park, People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD) leaders called for a large scale march on Government House next week to coincide with the meeting of the caretaker cabinet. The organizers also plan a "rehearsal" demonstration at Sanam Luang on March 13, the night before the cabinet march. An umbrella group of state enterprise employees has called for a general assembly on March 10 to discuss possible labor actions. Thaksin remains defiant of his critics, insisting that he will not be intimidated and has the support of millions. An academic leader within the anti-Thaksin movement told us that further measures to pressure Thaksin are planned and that he feared clashes between demonstrators and police (and possibly Thaksin partisans) could break out. End summary.

LATEST RALLY CALLS FOR MASSIVE MARCH ON CABINET MEET

2. (C) At a March 6 rally attended by an estimated 30,000 anti-Thaksin protesters at Sanam Luang Park, People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD) leaders called for a large scale march on Government House next week to coincide with the meeting of the caretaker cabinet. The marchers will reportedly try to hand a petition to Thaksin calling for him to resign. PAD core member Pibhop Dhongchai told the crowd that the morning procession on March 14 could be challenged by the Prime Minister. PAD has called for continuing demonstrations at Sanam Luang every evening until March 13, when a large "warm up" demonstration will be held on the eve of the cabinet march.

ACADEMICS PROMISE MORE ACTION; SAYS CLASHES PROBABLE

3. (C) Chulalongkorn University lecturer Dr. Surat Horachaikul, a leader of the Academic Network for Democracy (AND - a part of the anti-Thaksin coalition) told poloff on March 7 that the movement plans to mount boycotts of Thaksin family-owned companies AIS (cell phones) and ITV (television). AND will also stage protests outside the Singapore Embassy in the near future and postpone scheduled academic cooperation programs because of alleged Singapore support for Thaksin through the Temasek Corporation. Dr. Surat said that the movement was keeping things on a "low boil" this week, but that next Tuesday's march to petition Thaksin at his cabinet meeting would signal a new push to get him out of office.

4. (C) Surat said that he believes Thaksin wants to exit gracefully but will not do so until he is sure his assets are safe. Surat said that, regretfully, some academics had called for Thaksin to be stripped of his (presumably ill-gotten) assets. This, said Surat, leaves Thaksin little choice but to fight it out. Dr. Surat told poloff he believes that in the end Thaksin will be forced out and that the King will eventually and reluctantly intervene under constitution article 7. He could not give poloff any game plan by Thaksin's opponents save that Thaksin's resignation must be followed by free and transparent polls under a strong Election Commission. He cautioned however that he expects the spiraling level of anti-Thaksin demonstrations will lead to a clash between demonstrators and police (and possibly pro-Thaksin partisans). Dr. Surat vowed to prevent Thaksin from claiming legitimacy through what he predicts will be rigged polls next month.

5. (C) Another academic from Thammasat University told poloff in a separate meeting on March 7 that students plan to launch a "Vote No Vote" campaign as soon as exams conclude at the end of this week. The campaign would focus on convincing voters to go to the polls on April 2 and mark the space for "No Vote" on their ballots.

AND LABOR GROUPS CONSIDER ACTION

6. (C) Press articles on March 7 report plans by personnel of a number of state firms -- the Electricity Generating Authority of Thailand (EGAT), the Metropolitan Electricity Authority (MEA), the Provincial Electricity Authority (PEA), the Metropolitan Waterworks Authority (MWWA) and the Provincial Waterworks Authority (PWA), to conduct a work stoppage from next Monday to pressure Thaksin to step down. However, Embassy labor contacts tell us that these threats

were not likely to be carried out. Some in the movement fear a public backlash if services are disrupted, while others question the relevancy of the anti-Thaksin movement to their union members, saying that anti-Thaksin leaders such as Sondhi and Chamlong have agendas that do not include labor issues. The State Enterprise Relations Confederation (SERC) has notified the Labor Ministry that it would like to hold a general meeting on March 10 and may call for state enterprise workers to ask for personal leave on March 14 to join the anti-Thaksin march.

AND EVEN TROUBLE IN THE MALL FOR THAKSIN

17. (C) According to a senior editor of an opposition newspaper, Thaksin's wife and children were confronted by shoppers at an upscale Bangkok mall several days ago. Wanchai said that they were booed by many of the shoppers and assailed with the anti-Thaksin movement's slogan "Thaksin Get Out!" "Thaksin Get Out!" Finally, security guards rushed to the scene to escort them out of the shopping mall.

BOYCE